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SMALL NATIONALITIES

DISCUSSION ¹

MR. THEODORE PRINCE, New York city: I should like the privilege of expressing some conclusions that I have reached, in a measure, from the deliberations of the past few days. In the first place, I protest vigorously against the note of satisfaction that greeted Mr. London's criticism of the President for refusing passports to certain representatives delegated to attend the Stockholm Conference. All of us believe in honest criticism, but it must be constructive; it must look to the future and not to the past. We cannot aid the nation by indulging in controversies over matters of importance which have been decided by those who are in charge of the momentous policies of this country. They have decided that it is not for the interests of the country to have any special sect, society or class attend an unauthorized conference to discuss the weighty questions involved in a peace settlement. We must respect that decision; for we are at war, and we must mobilize our criticism as well as our forces; we must fight and hit as hard as we can. We must hurl an avalanche and overwhelm the foe. Anything that may help in that task is good; anything that impedes it, is bad.

I do not mean that the President of the United States or his advisers are above criticism; but a democracy, in conceding to its executive for the war period such autocratic powers of management as are necessary to ultimate success, must not neutralize its beneficent effect by indiscriminate criticism. Criticism to be useful must direct its forces to those matters that are in the making, and that can by constructive criticisms be shaped for the advantage of all. Then and then only, as Mr. London said, will the opposition of today be the wisdom of tomorrow. In my opinion it is proper to criticize the present tax program of the government; for that is not yet finally determined. The present generation will have a sufficiently heavy burden to bear without loading on its back that which future generations should carry. It is also appropriate to criticize the contemplated military plan by which (so far as is disclosed) we are to raise only five hundred thousand men during the first year. If the enemy

¹ At the afternoon session, May 31.

knows that a million to two million men are in training, ready to go to the firing line, the moral effect will be greater than the mere increase in actual man power. I cite these instances as an example of what I consider fair material for criticism, stimulation and agitation of current opinion directed towards a constructive course of action now pending, as befits a government of free people.

I have also been impressed with the freedom with which the speakers in these meetings have condemned the policy of our allies, particularly Great Britain. These nations are now our allies in a great and noble cause. Since we have pledged our fortunes and our lives to them, ought we not to give them our faith and confidence? Here again I contend for the right of criticism in such matters as will advance our common cause; just as I have suggested criticism of our government and its president, in the same spirit I would raise an issue with our allies.

This brings me to my third point, namely, that while we are loyally for war, we should be as loyally for peace. We have heard of the spirit of good-will and democracy as the only thing that will insure an international arrangement or status whereby peace can be universally secured. But in all these discussions good-will and democracy are apparently forces to be exerted after the end of the war. Why this procrastination? Great Britain, France and Belgium have borne the brunt of this fight, and are exhausted economically, physically and mentally; we cannot expect them to think much about peace and good-will. The United States, on the other hand, fresh, buoyant and elastic, has not yet felt the horror of millions of lives sacrificed. We can give our allies military and economic aid; but even more important, we can give them spiritual help. Why should we not now before this reign of ruin overwhelms us, influence our allies toward a settlement based on good-will? This is in no sense a pacifist doctrine; on the contrary, we must and should fight with all the energy that our vigor and resources allow. Yet can we not at the same time insist upon a spirit of condonement which must essentially lie at the basis of any settlement? The Central Powers naturally must maintain firmly their proud demands in the face of the Allies' grim determination to crush them. Is it not fair to assume that Germany and her allies may take a different point of view if we and our allies indicate to them by our spirit that good-will is uppermost in our minds despite the vigor of our onslaught?

This would be in line with all our traditions. A half-century ago we fought a war of ruin and devastation with our own brothers; it

ended in condonement, not humiliation: it was the sheathing of the sword that brought the war to a close.

That war was fought with full knowledge of the problems of reconstruction that would have to be faced after the war, and this war also should be fought with a clear idea of the reconstruction that must come after the war is won. In fact, the war will not have terminated until complete adjustment among the nations shall have taken place.

It was that spirit that animated our great leader who gave up the richest and most precious of our country's possessions, and like him we should fight and fight and keep on fighting, but bear in our hearts his great spirit and love for humanity, his "charity for all, and malice towards none."

MR. CLARENCE H. HOWARD, St. Louis, Missouri: I do not feel that I can return home without expressing to those who have conducted this conference my thanks for their service in bringing together this assemblage of people from all over the world to discuss our international relations. Throughout our discussions, I have been impressed with the idea that what we need is fellowship—a comprehensive, vital force, always finding expression in the Golden Rule. Fellowship has for its purpose the uniting and bringing together of all nations. Fellowship enriches and purifies character. Fellowship has for its chief foundation-stone co-operation. It has no element of racial or other prejudice or jealousies. By its very nature, it cannot exist alone, but requires all mankind to share it. Fellowship establishes the brotherhood of man. It belongs to no race, nation or color. We can find no solution of international difficulties except in a genuine spirit of fellowship.

MR. GEORGE L. FOX: I wish to show that Ireland is not oppressed by England. I object in the strongest way to seeing Ireland spoken of in that way unless you say that Porto Rico and the Philippines are oppressed by the United States. The Sinn Fein Irish Americans form probably not more than one-fifth of the Irish Americans of this country, but because they control almost all the Irish-American papers they have exercised a much greater influence on popular opinion than their numbers warrant. They hold, in the words of Francis Hackett, that the Irish "have long suffered at the hands of England mean and multiple infamies, more callous, more sustained and more fundamental than any which Austria threatened to Serbia."

To show how far these words vary from the truth, I wish to point

out certain results that would have flowed from the success of the Easter Rebellion in Dublin. First, the innocent aged poor, over seventy, many of whom are women, helpless and decrepit, would have lost their old-age pensions, and would have been reduced to extreme want if not to starvation and death. The population of Ireland is one-tenth of that of Great Britain, but one-fifth of the old-age pensioners live in Ireland. Two-thirds of the people in Ireland over seventy years old are old-age pensioners; this will make all Americans understand how brutally Great Britain oppresses Ireland. Since 1911, when the old-age pension law included the aged in the poor-house, the burden of support of the aged poor in Ireland has been largely transferred from the backs of the local taxpayer in Ireland, known there as the rate-payer, to the backs of the income-tax payers of the United Kingdom, comparatively few of whom are found in Ireland outside of Ulster and Dublin. Here we see another instance of the monstrous tyranny of Great Britain over Ireland.

Second, a successful rebellion in Ireland would have resulted in colossal robbery in connection with the ownership of the land. During the last half-century there has been a gradual transfer of land in that country in small parcels to the tenant farmer who tills it, and who in the course of sixty years on payment of annual rent will own it in fee. That has been effected thus far by using the money of the tax-payers of Great Britain, who advance the money, and hold a mortgage running for fifty or sixty years, on the land as security. The amount thus far advanced for that purpose approaches the sum of half a billion of dollars, with the land pledged under solemn contract as security for payment of interest and principal in annual installments. What would that mortgage have been worth in all areas where the sovereignty of the so-called Irish Republic had supplanted the sovereignty of Great Britain?

Third, there would have taken place in Ireland one of the worst financial crises and periods of suffering known since the famine. Trade would have been destroyed, commerce would have been at a standstill, and thousands of laborers would have been out of work and crying for bread. Ireland for the last two years has been prosperous, and the market and prices of her agricultural products have enormously improved. Ever since the latter part of the twelfth century, England has been her best market. This trade, which is the breath of life to Ireland, the promoters of the Easter Rebellion proposed to destroy and alienate so far as they could. At one stroke they would have cut down the value of farms and farm products, wherever they could get their will into force.

MIRAN SEVASLY, Chairman, Armenian National Union of America: If the existence of Austria has been a standing menace to the peace of Europe, as Professor Duggan stated in his remarkable address on nationalities, so has the existence of Turkey, ever since the day the European powers allowed the Turks to supplant the cross with the crescent at Constantinople. The outcome of this great war should be the restoration to nations of their lost heritage. The country stretching from the Black Sea to Arabia and from the Mediterranean to the Caucasus is under the heel of the worst despotism the world has ever known. In this country, which covers an area double the size of Germany, there still live the remnants of several historic races like the Greeks, Armenians, Syrians and Hebrews. I shall deal briefly with the claims of these nationalities.

The Armenians should be allotted all the territory from the Araxes River to the Cilician Gates, including the coast of Alexandretta. There were about three million of them stretching over a vast extent of land included within the provinces mentioned in Article 61 of the Berlin Treaty of 1878. No other people in the Near East is so capable of appreciating the progress and civilization of the West and is so worthy of American and European support and sympathy. Descended from the great Aryan race, with an historical monument of forty centuries, a language, a literature and a national democratic church of their own, with an indomitable energy and enterprise, the Armenians are destined to be the pioneers of civilization and progress in Asia Minor, and one of the living elements that can regenerate a country which the destructive hands of the Ottoman hordes have turned into a desert. They are fit partners in world democracy.

In this international conflagration, when the very existence of small nationalities is at stake, the case of the Armenians of Turkey stands out more strongly than that of any other race; for the wholesale butcheries, massacres and unheard-of deportations to which they have been subjected during these last two years in Asia Minor and wherever the Turks held sway over them, have exposed the remnants of that race to complete annihilation and extinction. The Armenians have always displayed, as Byron puts it, the virtues of peace, and the Young Turks, who apparently adopted the policy of settling the Armenian question by exterminating the Armenians, took advantage of their peaceful and pacific proclivities to give the finishing touch to the policy inaugurated by Sultan Hamed.

The Armenians are heartily desirous of seeing the restoration of peace and good-will among the nations as soon as possible, but they cannot believe in a peace which would be tantamount to dupery. They believe in a durable peace, a peace under the effective guarantee of a committee of nations; they believe that to secure this, adventurous militarism must be curbed. This problem the congress after the war will have to consider and finally solve. A system will have to be evolved out of the present international anarchy by which the rights of nations shall be respected; only in such a system can the Armenians find security for their future existence and welfare, so that they may fulfil their destiny in the concert of the progressive nations of the earth.

To the south of Alexandretta, to the confines of Palestine, and from Beirut to Damascus, lies the country known as Syria and the Lebanon, peopled by heterogeneous races of Semitic and Aryan origin, speaking many languages. Ever since the time of the Crusaders, France has exercised a sort of protectorate over this region, and in 1864 a French expedition to the Lebanon was sent to protect them against the onslaught of the Druses. France should organize her protectorate over this country, after the fashion of Tunis.

The territory stretching from the Sea of Marmora to the Gulf of Pamphylia is peopled chiefly by Greeks. More than a million Greeks live in this territory. Greece should have all the western Asia Minor coast and a hinterland of about one hundred and fifty miles to develop. Then Magna Græcia, the dream and goal of her patriots and martyrs, will have been fulfilled.

What, then, will become of the Turks? The Turks will not be expelled from any territory, but will prosper and develop under the ægis of the different races among whom decadent Turkey is to be divided. The Turk has justified his reputation of being an unspeakable master, but he may become a useful servant as soon as he transfers his allegiance to a foreign ruler. The Turks, however, may be relegated to the province extending from the western limits allotted to Armenia on the east and the eastern boundary of the Greek hinterland on the west, with Iconium as the capital. Iconium is the seat of the dancing dervishes, whose founder, Jelaledine, was the prophet of the Turks before they embraced the Mahomedan religion. He disseminated pantheistic ideas and broad liberalism. Turkish decadence began when, in the sixteenth century the Turks abjured Jelaledine, and made of Turkey a theocracy, drying up in the Turkish soul the splendid ideas and thoughts disseminated by the adepts of Jelaledine.

By transferring their capital to Iconium, the Turks will be brought into contact with the expounders of these ideas, and Iconium under European control may become the center of tolerance and progress.

I cannot close without saying a few words about Palestine. At the close of this European conflagration the Jews, I believe, should be restored to the country of their sires, where the descendants of the prophets may develop in contentment and peace. The Jews will be squeezed in between the French protectorate in Syria and the English protectorate of Egypt and Arabia, but they will have a vast hinterland in the direction of Mesopotamia, of ancient Nineveh and Babylon; here they may prosper and expand.

To sum up, the powers should observe a self-denying ordinance for themselves as far as possible in the solution of these questions; the principle of nationality should be respected and the different autonomous states or annexed territories should be organized on historic and ethnological grounds. Only thus will a lasting peace be secured.

PROFESSOR HENRY R. SEAGER,¹ Columbia University: This conference is drawing toward its close, and it is beginning to be possible to appraise its value. It was projected before we entered the war, and since that event some of our friends have gone so far as to think that it should not have been held, on the ground that we should now devote all our thought and energy to the defeat of Germany. I agree that we should devote all our thought and energy to the defeat of our enemy, but is it not that very fact that is making this conference so valuable at this time—and makes it such an important contribution to the part this country may play in the war? In the prize ring the way to defeat the enemy is by the knockout blow. Lloyd George, in one of his eloquent appeals, suggested that was the method by which this war should be ended. It was not very long ago that our own President suggested a very different method, a peace without victory. Events are moving so rapidly that, confident as we are of the outcome of the war, few of us would now venture a prediction as to just how it will end. Is it not certain, however, that one thing that will contribute greatly toward a more speedy ending is the reformulation of the war aims of the Allies? Such a restatement has been made necessary by our entry into the war, and even more by the Russian Revolution. I have no way of knowing how soon that reformulation may be expected, but as intelligent

¹ Introductory remarks as presiding officer at the afternoon session, May 31.

citizens we all know that this is receiving the earnest consideration of our leaders at Washington, and of our allies. What I want to say with emphasis is that this conference is making an important contribution in illuminating aspects of the world situation which must be taken into account in that reformulation. When its terms are decided upon, we all know, from our knowledge of the President, that they will be such as to command the enthusiastic support of the democratically minded the world over. The way in which it will hasten the end of the struggle is by sounding the death knell of the hope on the part of Germany of a separate Russian peace, by solidifying public opinion in this country to the most vigorous possible prosecution of the war, and finally by adding momentum to the rising tide of discontent in Germany, which will in time convince the German government that its defeat is inevitable. No session is better calculated to contribute material for this reformulation than that of this afternoon.

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